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**APPRECIATE THE KNOWLEDGE
AND EXPERIENCE OF PRIOR GENERATIONS**

I recently read a poem that was a great source of inspiration to me. It was about an old man who had returned home from a very long and exciting voyage. He had the choice to stay home, in a place that was comfortable and dull, or to go out to sea again, and sail until the day he died. The man chose to sail again, even though he knew the risks, because seeking adventure was a part of his spirit. This poem opened my eyes.

Many of us have grandparents, and if we don't, we at least know someone who is a senior. We have all seen the way many of these people are treated by those who are younger than they are. Things are overly simplified for them, they are yelled at because no one thinks they are heard by the elderly, and their opinions are brushed aside simply because they are old. But these are the people who know so much more than we do. They have been through wars, and some of the most revolutionary times the world has ever known. And they are survivors. People no longer value their opinions because they are not up to date with the latest technologies, but the elderly still know more about us than we know about ourselves. Humankind has not changed so much since they were young. We still fight wars, we can still be petty, we still love and we still hate. The elderly have seen all this, they have experienced all the things that we won't be able to experience, until we get older too. They have learned from their lives.

So why should we ignore them? Why don't we embrace all that they can teach us? Because physically, they are old. They don't hear us as well as everyone else, they repeat themselves. But that is no reason to shut them out. It is no reason to shut our minds to all the things we can learn from them.

Those of you who are teenagers, like myself, can relate so well to the elderly,

even if you don't realize it. I know you've felt frustrated when your opinions and ideas are overlooked because of your age. I know how hard it can be to get people to respect you because of your age, I've been there too. And yet, who knows these things better than the elderly? They were young and ignored once too. Now that they are older and have supposedly fulfilled their usefulness to the world, they are ignored again. Can you imagine how frustrating it must be to once have had the respect of so many people, to have everyone listening to you and valuing what you say, and suddenly have that taken away because you can no longer walk up a flight of stairs without losing your breath? I suggest that you try imagining it. Everyone, no matter what your age, for just one minute put yourselves in the shoes of your parents or grandparents. They know they are still useful, that they have much to share with our generation, but they have a great deal of difficulty proving it, because we are so wilfully blind.

I hope that you will all stop for just a little while and talk to someone who is 80 years old. I hope that you will ask their opinions on important issues about how to deal with people. I hope that you will learn to appreciate the elderly for their contributions to the world, and their irrepressible spirits. I hope you do these things, because they will truly enrich your life.